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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Major Chinese-language Taipei dailies focused their coverage September 16 on local issues such as a carcinogenic substance being found in Taiwan fish for sale, and the continuing boycott by opposition parties of legislative affairs in the Legislative Yuan. The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily," however, ran a banner headline on its front page that read: "[Chinese President] Hu Jintao slashes at Taiwan by making disguised offers to help poor countries at the U.N. summit." The sub-headline added: "[China] offers the world's poorest countries tariff-free trade, debt relief, and cheap loans, but excludes the dozen of countries that have diplomatic ties with Taiwan." The newspaper also carried a news story on its second page that was topped with the headline: "Bush urges Hu again to engage in a dialogue with Taiwan."

In terms of the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, several Chinese-language Taiwan newspapers reported in their inside pages remarks made by U.S. Department of State East Asian Bureau Senior Advisor James Keith Thursday before the U.S.-China Economic and Safety Review Commission. Keith said although the U.S. arms procurement bill has been blocked by Taiwan's opposition parties, Taiwan's ruling party should also take some of the blame for not having increased the national defense budget much over the past six years.

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a commentary criticizing the proposal made by Chinese President Hu Jintao during his meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush Tuesday that Washington join China in maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. The newspaper called the proposal "absurd" and said "it is like a bandit who calls shamelessly upon the police to join him in maintaining social order." Journalist Sun Yang-ming, however, said Hu's proposal can be seen as an attempt by Beijing to have the United States join it in setting up a "framework" to constrain Taiwan. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" discussed current Washington-Taipei ties by saying both the United States and Taiwan must "make a much more committed effort to set up lines of communication." End summary.

A) "Having Bandits Maintain Social Order?"

The "Free Talk" column of the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] wrote (9/16):

"During his meeting with U.S. President George W. Bush, Chinese President Hu Jintao urged the United States to join China in safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. This proposal is so absurd that people do not know whether to laugh or cry. .

". [If] the Chinese authorities genuinely believe that Taiwan is part of its territory, it should then belong to China's domestic affairs about how to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. How can it allow foreign forces to interfere? Thus, judged from Hu's proposal of having China and the United States jointly manage the Taiwan Strait, China obviously has tacitly agreed that Taiwan is an independent sovereign state over which China has no authority. That's why China hopes to get, via the United States, a share of the loot between superpowers.

"What's so absurd is that the United States is a democratic country, and so is Taiwan. The United States therefore will not possibly respond to such a public trading of power proposed by China and sell out the 23 million people on Taiwan. Even though Washington and Taipei have no diplomatic ties, the Taiwan Relations Act clearly stipulates the United States' commitments to the Taiwan people. China evidently has met rejection. .

"Most absurd of all is that China upholds the 'One China' [principle] and will not promise to renounce the use of force against Taiwan. As the biggest ringleader to sabotage stability across the Taiwan Strait, China has also deployed more than 700 missiles aimed at Taiwan. Now the biggest threat to cross-Strait security is urging the United States to work with it and jointly maintain peace and stability across the Strait. [The offer] is like a bandit who calls shamelessly upon the police to join him in maintaining social order. This is indeed very absurd."

B) "A New Probe Concerning China-U.S. 'Joint Management of the Taiwan Strait'"

Journalist Sun Yang-ming said in the "United Notes" column of the conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (9/16):

". Unlike what happened in their previous meetings, [Chinese President] Hu Jintao stated clearly in the summit [with U.S. President George W. Bush Tuesday] that he hopes that Washington would join Beijing's side to maintain stability across the Taiwan Strait. Hu's statement basically can be seen as an attempt by Beijing to have the United States join it in setting up a "framework" to constrain Taiwan.

"It is noteworthy that such a concept of 'joint management' of the Taiwan Strait or Taiwan is not aimed at compelling Taiwan to promote peaceful unification [with China] but at treating [the policy of] 'maintaining of the status quo' as a fundamental concept for now. In fact, this is already a basic consensus and a bottom line for Washington and Beijing with regard to the policy toward Taiwan. .

"As a matter of fact, the proposal of having Washington and Beijing 'jointly manage the Taiwan Strait,' or the idea or approach to set up a task force to jointly manage the Taiwan issue, was formed as early as in the second half of 2004. It's just that such an idea or approach continued to remain on the 'Track Two' level, without really being carried out via the official channel. Now that Hu has formally proposed it to Bush personally, it remains to be seen how the United States will respond. ."

C) "Clearing the Line to Washington"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (9/16):

". The brief visit to Taiwan by Dana White, the country director for Taiwan in the US Office of the Secretary of Defense, is therefore a welcome tonic. White came to finalize high-level security talks between Taipei and Washington that were originally canceled because of the scheduled visit to the US by Chinese President Hu Jintao. But the initial cancellation - a painful and demeaning slap in the face for Taiwan - points to an unsettling change stateside: a growing tension between pro-China and pro-Taiwan forces in the Bush administration, with the former prevailing.

"The mantra of protecting the 'cross-strait status quo' has been chanted by officials in all countries involved, but until such time that those US officials mired in an Orientalist devotion to a utopian Chinese state recognize that the 'status quo' can be maintained neither passively nor indefinitely, the eroding of both Taiwanese and US interests in the region will continue and most likely accelerate.

"In the meantime, President Chen Shui-bian's administration can only be grateful to the US Department of Defense for intervening to ensure that this year's Monterey talks will take place. It is crucial, however, that defenders of democracy on both sides of the Pacific take this incident as a sign of things to come, and make a much more committed effort to set up lines of communication. .

". [W]hat has been genuinely surprising is the amateurish and slovenly attempts by the Chen administration to communicate with Washington, and, just as importantly, members of Congress. It is not clear who should be held responsible: Chen, perhaps, or the increasingly discredited Boy Scouts - his youthful team of so-called advisers.

"Regardless, the truth of the matter is that if there is going to be change, Taiwan cannot afford to be anything less than an instigator of it rather than its dumb object. As the Bush administration struggles with Iraq and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, a more proactive and focused campaign for practical support

among members of Congress and other US officials will vindicate supporters in the US and at home at a time of considerable distraction for the American public. There is no clearer road to take."

KEEGAN